Name of Provider: [St Mary's College]

UKPRN: [10006226]

ST MARY'S COLLEGE

TEF Year Four provider submission

Mission

St Mary's College is a Roman Catholic College operating under the trusteeship of the Marist Fathers.

We base our philosophy on the true Christian Values proclaimed in the gospel and seek to provide a challenging, high quality education whereby all members of the College community can grow as balanced individuals, morally, intellectually and spiritually.

Provider Context

St Mary's College is a Roman Catholic sixth form college which has served the Catholic community of East Lancashire since 1925, when founded by the Marist Fathers. The College has a strong tradition of responding to the needs of the Catholic and the local community, and as such has embraced the theme of 'opportunity for all' in its ethos. Since its foundation as a Catholic grammar school for boys, it has developed into an inclusive college, dedicated to the holistic education of its students. In delivering its mission, the College welcomes both students and staff of all religious beliefs and those with no faith, as fully participating members of the Marist community.

The College predominantly provides 16 to 19 study programmes through A level and vocational provision. The current academic year (2018/19) comprises of 697 students enrolled on 16 to 19 study programmes with the vast majority of students following level 3 programmes; A level provision make up approximately 51% of the college, approximately 41% of learners are Vocational learners, 6% are on level 2 programmes and 2% on entry level/level 1 programmes.

In addition to the 16 to 19 study programmes the College also offers Foundation, Bachelors of Arts with Honours and Postgraduate Degree programmes in partnership with the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) and Liverpool Hope University respectively. The HE provision of the current academic year (2018/19) comprises of 181 students; 17% on Foundation, 73% on Bachelor of Arts with Honours and 10% on Postgraduate programmes. Both HEI partnerships are longstanding and have been successful in providing flexible and accessible study opportunities to a diverse students body including but not limited to; Mature students, First generation students, Students from low income families and Students from low participation neighbourhoods.

Since 2003, the College has also had nursery provision on the College Campus, alongside a second nursery at Wensley Fold (2008) and a third 'St Mary's Nursery @ the Park' (2014) which further adds and supports the diverse nature of the provision.

The year 2017 observed St Mary's College and Liverpool Hope University widening the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) provision in Blackburn by launching a new University Centre. The Liverpool Hope University Centre offers an extensive range of high quality CPD opportunities for individuals and organisations working within the Education and Business sector. The Education programmes offered within this partnership are practice-based and impact driven in order to support high quality teaching and learning and school improvement priorities, our Education CPD portfolio is, therefore, continually updated to respond quickly to

national and local initiatives and has been designed to be delivered in a flexible way. Through this development the College has been able to offer a range of delivery patterns to suit school preferences including:

- Conference days, twilights and weekend sessions
- Bespoke programmes/consultancy delivered or onsite training at local school
- Fully accredited CPD modules and programmes of study at Masters Level.

Likewise, the College is exploring a range of training, development and support to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as well as comprehensive start-up programmes for new businesses within Lancashire, through the expertise within the University's Business Gateway. From evening workshops to in-depth growth programmes, we aim to deliver a range of expertise and training including: leadership and management, strategic development, marketing, entrepreneurship and finance.

In 2018, the Board of Governors at St Mary's College and Cheadle and Marple Sixth Form College; alongside the Council of Liverpool Hope University undertook an agreement in principle that all three institutions would form a Federation. This combination of the differing expertise and experiences together with an overriding desire to improve standards and life chances for students across Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Blackburn and Darwen is fundamental to the college's prevailing strategic priority of delivering an outstanding student experience which embraces the fundamentals of widening participation.

Additionally, the observed continued growth of vocational learners within our 16-19 cohort (23%, 2015 to 41%, 2018) and with approximately 15% not applying for University, the College is expanding the vocational provision and exploring the development of an augmented HE Access programme to enhance and facilitate progression for our learners.

Due to the nature of the College's varying partnership with our HEI's, the TEF metrics purely cover the St Mary's College and UCLan provision (as a result of a successful bid to the Margin and Core Fund, the College has had its own directly funded numbers since 2013) thus the primary focus of external quality assurance reviews embedded will highlight areas pertinent only to this provision but this does not infer that there is a difference in quality across the establishment.

The St Mary's and UCLan Higher Education provision was subject to a follow up Higher Education Review (HER) in March 2017, when the HER Team formed the following judgement about the provision;

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisations **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

The initial HER team (2015) also identified the following features of good practice at St Mary's College;

- The high levels of support provided to students by the Higher Education Advisors (HE Advisors)
- The breadth of the College's engagement with its awarding body and other colleges in the collaborative network

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Further to this the same provision was also subjected to a UCLan Periodic Course Review (PCR) in December 2017, at which a panel of external industry and academic advisors informed by, amongst other things, student feedback and resources audits, approved the continued operation, via full time and part time delivery, of:

- FdA Health and Social Care
- FdA Health and Social Care (Social Care)
- Foundation Certificate in Health & Social Care
- Foundation Certificate in Health & Social Care (Social Care).

The PCR panel also commended the HE team on the following;

- The College's engagement with UCLan including University quality assurance processes;
- The way in which the College and UCLan School collaborate in a spirit of partnership, for example the way in which placement opportunities for students are ensured;
- Responsiveness to student feedback and recommendations arising from annual monitoring, both by the College and UCLan School;
- Student feedback identifies feedback from lecturers (written, verbal, formative and summative) as a strength;
- The commitment and resilience of the staff team;
- Consistent student recruitment despite a challenging local market.

Moreover, the PCR panel cited the following areas of innovative practice;

- The College's holistic approach to student support. College HE Advisers engage with students throughout the student journey including at admissions stage, in providing study skills support before and during students' study, and providing a programme of pastoral support. The supportive ethos of the College is therefore reflected throughout students' learning journey.

Evidently, it is clear that College Governors, the Executive Management Team and staff prioritise a high quality, supportive and personalised learning experience for our students here at St Mary's College, with the College Governors and the Executive Management Team embedding the development and growth of HE within the College's Strategic Plan.

Teaching Quality

The teaching, learning and assessment within the St Mary's College and UCLan provision has consistently been highlighted as good in the National Student Survey (NSS), Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQs) and at Staff Student Liaison (SSL) Meeting. Additionally, the TEF metrics for the last couple of years have judged this area of assessment within the top 10% of absolute performance and recognises it as being above the national benchmark (+1.5 TEF4, +2.4 TEF3).

However, the College continues to strive for improvements with many recent developments taking place in teaching and learning at St Mary's College. A Director of Teaching, Learning and Assessment has been appointed, a role new to the College, and a series of high quality CPD training sessions have been provided for teaching staff. Over the next two years, the College aim to continue to introduce new strategies to improve teaching and learning to place St Mary's College at the forefront of pedagogical developments through the following main principles;

- To develop independent learning and foster student autonomy
- To provide effective staff Continuous Professional Development
- To provide lessons that challenge and inspire students
- To provide an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all

- To embrace developments in digital learning and technology

The College promotes high quality teaching through an Observation of Teaching and Learning Policy, Time Off for Training Policy and a Peer Observation scheme. The College's approach to teaching and learning provides opportunities for staff to share best practice and engage in continuing professional development, within both HE and FE, through cross-College inset training days and a variety of opportunities provided by both partner HEI's.

In reference to assessments, the College adopts the assessment policies and regulations of UCLan. These include provision for the award of credit based on accreditation of prior certificated and/or experiential learning; policies and procedures for consideration of extenuating circumstances; and guidelines for moderation and marking expectation, which are overseen by UCLan's Course or Module Leads. The course approval and review process of UCLan requires that assessment strategies are articulated at the outset at both module and course level. Subsequently, College teachers receive verified assessments from UCLan.

Embedded into our culture and ethos is the support and development of staff, with members of the teaching team engaging with scholarly activities across both HEI partners and attending events, which include but are not limited to, Annual Teaching and Learning Conferences, Blended Learning Community of Practice Meetings and Conferences, Network Teaching Community of Practice Meetings, and Guest Speaker Talks. The regular attendance at the varying Community of Practice relevant to HE successfully provide a forum for teachers to share good practices with a key emphasise on HE prioritises rather than FE. Following the recent PCR (2017) the College are also exploring further development opportunities through the Fellowship (FHEA), awarded to professionals who can demonstrate they meet the criteria of Descriptor 2 (D2) of the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF).

The introduction of the Federation will also ensure that our students will receive the very highest standards in teaching, learning and assessment, through the further development of close working relationships between colleagues at Liverpool Hope University and Cheadle and Marple Sixth Form College. It is anticipated that our teachers will work together within the Federation to develop curriculum hubs to ensure that their subject knowledge reflects the latest curriculum developments and academic thought.

The College enjoys a productive working relationship with UCLan, the validating HEI, for the Foundation Degree provision (which was commended in both the College's HER and PCR) that enables system which effectively judge the appropriateness of staff teaching on the HE provision. All teachers who deliver HE courses, are approved to do so by UCLan, consequently, teachers possess the same academic achievements, knowledge and experiences as UCLan employees which ensures St Mary's students benefit from highly skilled teaching that is at least equivalent to that at the university. UCLan validate the suitability of all teachers through the PCR process.

The HE courses are timetable to facilitate the demands of our students, with compulsory attendance being that of two days, to enable them to study whilst working. The days are also timetabled around the school run to enable parents to access the full range of resources on those days.

Learning Environment

The College is committed to developing and ensuring a learning environment that meets the individual and collective needs of our varied student body through providing a physical and cultural environment that is empowering and engaging, a theme accentuated in the HER (2015 & 2017). The review team (HER 2015 & 2017) noted that '*the mission and culture of St Mary's College, Blackburn encourages student involvement in open and frequent dialogue….*' and '*current students and alumni…. commented positively about the opportunities to develop as independent students and the support of the Higher Education Advisors and academic staff'.*

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As the provision of HE is embedded into the College's culture as a progression option for our 16 to 19 students, the HE daytime teaching predominately takes place within the main college building, with dedicated HE classrooms, computer rooms and study spaces. Additionally, as previously noted, the College has a dedicated Liverpool Hope University Building situated on site, which is exclusively used for HE and CPD course delivery. The library houses a high volume of relevant texts and a bookable space for independent or group study, which is available 8.30am to 8.00pm daily. The College also provides a library loan scheme between itself and UCLan's Library, which students noted as effective and beneficial in the HER (2015). The nature of our student's limits availability to access resources onsite to scheduled teaching days, accordingly the College enables access to all teaching and additional supporting information via the University's VLE, Blackboard, with the added facility to upload all summative assessments off site. Furthermore, all St Mary's HE students enrolled on an UClan validated course have access to the full range of the University's digital resources, which can also be accessed remotely, with training and support on accessibility embedded into the College's tutorial programme.

Academic Tutors, Higher Education Advisors and Support Staff work closely with UCLan's Module Leads and Programme Support Staff in the development of the curriculum; a bespoke tutorial programme which manages the increasing challenges of higher education study for our varied student body; and ensuring work placement opportunities contribute to professional development, improving confidence and an awareness of individual career and progression routes. Thus, the College is confident and extremely proud of the provision implemented in response to the needs of its students and their development as independent, analytical and critical students.

Academic Support

The College mission and ethos encompasses the fact that students learn in different ways and as such consider an array of other components besides content or curriculum in an educational digital age that is often unfamiliar to a vast amount of our targeted audience. With twenty years' experience (forming originally in partnership with Liverpool Hope University, 1999) of working with underrepresented groups in HE, the College aim is to create an environment for learning that optimises the ability of students to learn, through a systematic and flexible structure of additional pastoral and academic support.

To enable the College to meet this objective the College employ a team of Higher Education Advisors/Support Tutor (HE Advisor), in addition to the teaching team, that support students from the moment of initial enquiry through to graduation. A HE Advisor is assigned to individual students to provide;

- One to one pre entry advice and guidance sessions;
- UCAS, Student Finance England and Subject Taster sessions;
- Alternative Assessment for non-traditional entry into HE;
- 'Degree Study Success programme' prior to course enrolment that is pivotal in raising learner awareness of the expectations of higher education study
- Enrolment and Induction Sessions, which include guidance on completing the DBS Application (a pre-requisite for the course);
- One to one additional needs guidance session, which is followed by a formal needs assessments and support in accessing this service;
- Pastoral care and support;
- One to one progression/development sessions at least once a term;
- Bespoke Tutorial Programme;
- One to one assignment support sessions;
- Drop in Academic/Study Skills Workshops;
- Information, advice and guidance on applications for further study or employment.

As all of our UCLan validated courses require a placement element, the College emphasises the essence of placement learning at the pre entry advice and guidance session and has a specific member of staff that work with the individual students to source, secure and plan placement activities appropriate to the student's future aspirations.

In addition to the support provided by the HE Advisor the Library and IT Support Staff provide sessions on research skills, IT packages used on course and where appropriate validating a referencing source.

St Mary's College are extremely proud of the fact that, not only do our most recent metrics highlight 'academic support' as one of our key areas of assessments that fall within the top 10% of absolute performance and as 8.7% above the benchmark, but that both the HER (2015) and PCR (2017) have also commended the College on the level of support provided to our student body because our aim, with reference to our Mission, is to provide considerable provision of pastoral care, study skills, advice and guidance, to help those students returning to education or coming from non-conventional routes into higher education.

Continuation

The continuation metrics for St Mary's College is flagged as significantly low, however, the HER (2015) highlighted the fact that *'the College recognises the challenges of students' transition and takes deliberate steps to facilitate transition, including the support from Higher Education Advisors, the Degree Study Success programme and promoting independent learning*.'

It is particularly pertinent to emphasise that due to the nature of our partnership with our validating HEI, students often enrol onto the College's programmes to gain the entry requirements of a more selective Allied Health Course (Nursing, Midwifery etc.) based at the University. Thus students enrol onto a two year programme but if they achieve a certain academic standard in year 1, they will transfer to that particular course at the HEI rather than progress to year 2 at the College and are subsequently not recorded in our data. It is evident from the 100% progression to further study or employment at the end of year 2 that the continuation data is impacted by this.

In addition to this, as previously noted the College recruit a significant number of mature applicants (84%) who reside in areas identified within the index of multiple deprivation, hence the majority of our students have significant work, family and personal commitments that could impact on their ability to continue study. The college has worked tirelessly to endeavour that systems are in place to support the unpredictable nature of such a cohort but some circumstances simply override a student's desire to study and a withdrawal from study is judged as the best course of action for the student.

The nature of the programmes (Health and Social Care) available at St Mary's College, also, predominately attract students with life experiences that align with the course content, thus the challenges associated with the unpredictability of life as a mature student are exasperated by these additional factors and can sometimes adversely affects ability to study.

Student Outcomes and Learning Gain

The qualifications of the population for Blackburn with Darwen are lower than the North West area, and the UK average, except in 'other qualifications' which included foreign qualifications.

Figure 1. Local authority profile, from Office for National Statistics

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Qualifications (Jan 2017-Dec 2017)

	Blackburn With Darwen (Level)	Blackburn With Darwen (%)	North West (%)	Great Britain (%)
NVQ4 And Above	26,200	28.9	34.5	38.6
NVQ3 And Above	42,700	46.9	54.2	57.2
NVQ2 And Above	59,700	65.7	74.0	74.7
NVQ1 And Above	71,400	78.6	85.2	85.4
Other Qualifications	8,500	9.3	5.8	6.9
No Qualifications	11,000	12.1	9.0	7.7

Source: ONS annual population survey
Notes: For an explanation of the qualification levels see the definitions section.
Numbers and % are for those of aged 16-64
% is a proportion of resident population of area aged 16-64

Additionally, a working-age population of 153,600 compromises of 70.8% (16-64) being in employment, a 3.8 percentage point increase from 2010. This is lower than Lancashire (74.4%) and National rates (74.8%). The Ribble Valley has the highest employment rate of the four local areas at 84.3% and Rossendale is above the area average at 73.9%, Hyndburn stands at 70.4% and Blackburn with Darwen is the lowest at 64.5%.

Across Blackburn with Darwen, Hyndburn, Rossendale and the Ribble Valley:
- 5,500 residents are unemployed and looking for work
- 57,800 residents are economically inactive – 10,300 of these residents (25%) would like to work.

(source : The Blackburn with Darwen, Hyndburn, Rossendale and Ribble Valley Labour Market Intelligence Report Part of the 2018 Lancashire Labour Market Intelligence Toolkit)

Employment breakdown:

There are 12,800 businesses based in Blackburn with Darwen, Hyndburn, Rossendale and Ribble Valley, of which 88% are micro businesses employing fewer than 10 people. 10% are small businesses employing between 10 and 49 people; 2% are medium sized businesses employing between 50 and 249 people and fewer than 1% are large and employ more than 250 people.

Sector employment in Blackburn with Darwen, Hyndburn, Rossendale and Ribble Valley:
25,000 people work in **wholesale and retail** sector (shops and their suppliers) this includes management, cleaning and security.
23,300 are employed in **advanced manufacturing** with 30% of workers in technical roles; one quarter are skilled trades and 20% are in less skilled roles.
22,000 people work in **Health & Social work**, including medical professionals as well as social/care workers and administrators.
18,500 are employed in the **financial and professional services** sector which covers a wide range of business-related activities including advertising, security, cleaning, architecture and law.
14,000 people work in the **education** sector in schools, colleges and University centres.
11,000 people work within the **visitor economy**, which includes hotels, restaurants and tourist attractions.
6,000 people are employed in **transport and storage**, in areas such as rail, postal and warehouses, as well as the admin & finance roles involved.
5,000 people work in the **energy and environmental technology** sector with one third of these jobs being professional, technical or managerial jobs.
4,500 are employed in the **construction** sector, with over half being skilled trades.
3,500 work in the **creative and digital industries** including IT and computing, newspapers, music & arts, and design.
14,200 are in other sector jobs.

(source : The Blackburn with Darwen, Hyndburn, Rossendale and Ribble Valley Labour Market Intelligence Report Part of the 2018 Lancashire Labour Market Intelligence Toolkit)

The data emphasises the impact the College has had with having 100% of our student progressing onto employment or further study, particularly as the majority of our student body reside within Blackburn with Darwen which has a below average employment rate. The College's widening participation commitment place our target audience as those residence that have low or no formal qualifications, thus the college is incredibly proud of the success rate here.

The College's Executive Management Team have a clear strategic plan to develop these links with employment further, which was demonstrated with the recruitment of a Placement Officer with specific responsibilities for HE.